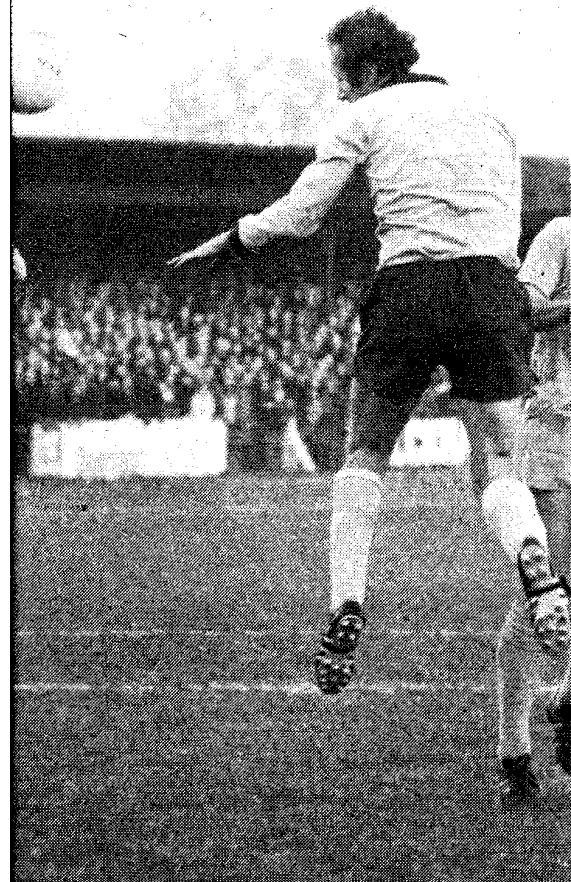


WANDERERS: WHERE WILL IT ALL END?



Goal in the F.A. Cup-tie against Reading. Many thought a sorry was a formality before a ball was kicked.

Appearance list

Wanderers' top goalscorer last season, heads the appearance list. Ian Keith Mead. Keith was the only player to appear in every

RIL	FAC	FAT	F	B&B	RIL CUP	Total
36	3	2	14	2	2	59
9(1)	0	2	7(1)	2	2	22(2)
37(0)	3	2	13	2	3	60
28(7)	3	0	3(6)	1(1)	2(1)	37(15)
13(2)	2	1(1)	7(1)	0	1(1)	24(5)
4(7)	0	0	5	0	0	9(7)
39(1)	3	2	8(1)	1	3	54(2)
11(7)	2	0(1)	8(6)	1(1)	1(1)	23(16)
25(2)	3	2	6(1)	1	0	37(3)
23	0	2	8(1)	2	2	43(1)
41	3	2	10	0(1)	1	35(5)
42	3	2	14	2	3	65
40	3	2	8(1)	2	3	58(1)
30(1)	2(1)	2	14	2	3	53(2)
19	0	1	9(2)	2	2	33(2)
11	0	0	1(3)	0	1	13(3)

ing players left the club at various stages of the season

4(5)	0	0	4(3)	0(1)	0	8(9)
5	0	0	2(1)	0	0	7(1)
9(4)	0(1)	1	3(2)	0	0	13(7)
6(0)	0	0	2(1)	0	0	8(1)
0(1)	0	0	3	0	0	3(1)

League, FAC — F.A. Cup, FAT — F.A. Trophy, F — Friendlies, B&B — Berks and Bucks Senior League Cup.

Only matches: G. Baverstock (twice), M. Hughes (2), D. Best (2), J. Cocks (2), W. Roberts (3), R. Collins (2), D. Swain, S. Vass, D. Reed, N. Wheeldon, P. Griffiths, T. Reardon, G.

ONCE again, Wycombe Wanderers F.C. can look back on another season of success this year, having finished runners-up in the Rothmans Isthmian League and also reaching the second round of the F.A. Cup.

For sheer consistency alone, Wycombe's record over the last ten years takes some beating. Four league titles, three times runners up and continued success in the F.A. Cup.

So where will it all end? One can look back at many clubs in both professional and non-league football and see how their fortunes have changed. Take Leytonstone, for instance. They won the championship seven times in nine years during the 1940's but now they are going through a quiet spell. The same thing happened to Dulwich Hamlet, relegated to Division Two last season.

There's no doubt that this current spell of Wycombe's has been the most successful ever in the club's 90 year history and each season the task of maintaining the standard they set themselves becomes more difficult. Inevitably, the club's followers become blasé with repeated success and the fall in gates over the years reflects the problem.

Football attendances have declined seriously in the last decade and can no longer be relied upon to produce a substantial source of revenue to non-league clubs. Wanderers are better off than most but they deserve more than the average 1,000 attendance for league games.

Looking back on season 1976-77, Wycombe have every reason to feel satisfied. In many ways it was a testing time for the club with a new manager coming into the set-up for the first time in many years. Ted Powell was the new man and although he kept the Blues up with the pacesetters in the league, there was a certain lack of atmosphere at Loakes Park that had been generated by his predecessor, Brian Lee.

UNLUCKY

I felt Ted was a little unlucky in some ways, because he came to a highly successful club and was on a 'hiding for nothing' from the word go. A classic example was the F.A. Cup second round tie with Reading. After Wanderers' success in previous years, most people took it for granted that the Third Division club would go down on the

Loakes Park slope and when the Blues lost 2-1, it was regarded as a major failure. People forgot that this was the second round of the Cup and that Wycombe had only reached that stage a handful of times in their history.

Powell certainly had the right ideas about the game and maintained the high standard of sportsmanship in the team. But some of his signings were difficult to fathom and the dressing room spirit was never as high as before.

The club's decision to dismiss their manager when he applied for a top job in Africa, left them with a sizeable problem and it is to their credit that they came through with flying colours. The man responsible for continuing the success was John Reardon, the assistant manager, and to everyone's delight he kept the club in the running for the title until the very last Saturday of the season.

John now has full charge of the side, having been appointed manager a month ago. Now he is busy trying to attract players to the club and his real test will come next season, when he faces the arduous job of continuing the club's success.

REMARKABLE

Looking back on the performances on the field, one man stands out particularly in Ian Pearson. Ian made 65 appearances for Wycombe and scored 48 goals, a remarkable achievement. Pearson's skills saved Wycombe on more than one occasion and it is no surprise that he is wanted by league clubs. No doubt Wanderers would like to keep him but if someone is prepared to pay the substantial fee on his head, it could be that Ian will join several other ex-Wanderers in the Football League.

Although Pearson's spec-

tacular goalscoring inevitably stole the headlines, the consistency of Wycombe's back four did not go un-noticed. The experienced partnership of Keith Mead and Alan Phillips in the middle and the flair of Paul Birdseye and Bob Davies at full back, made them the best defensive unit in the league. Phillips again had an outstanding season after his traditional shaky start while Davies was the most improved player in the squad.

The goalkeepers shared the role and both John Maskell and Peter Spittle performed with distinction.

MIDFIELD PROBLEM

Midfield was always a problem. There was no lack of effort but the loss of the talented Terry Reardon left a massive gap which was never breached. Mick Hollifield produced his best football under John Reardon's leadership while John Priestley fulfilled the role of ball winner but lacked vision with his passing. The third midfield role was shared between Peter Cruse, Graham Mackenzie, Gavin Fraser and Alan Davies after Howard Kennedy's serious leg injury robbed Wycombe of a settled trio. Hopefully Howard will be back in action again next season.

It was a similar story upfront where Wanderers rarely fielded a settled unit. Pearson's goalscoring was relied upon heavily although there was a notable contribution from Howard Kettleborough, who has now left the club. Dylan Evans, a great trier, scored just seven goals in 37 games, while Steve Hill struggled in league matches.

Compared with previous years, last season's squad was generally weaker in two of the three departments, especially upfront. In this light, Wanderers did better than many expected by finishing second.

Whether they can repeat their success again remains to be seen but I anticipate few changes in the playing staff. Manager Reardon has a strong defence to build on and with the addition of a couple of new players, Wanderers could well be riding high again next season. That is, of course, if we are not expecting too much once again!

GOALS

Ian Pearson 48, Howard Kettleborough 21, Mick Hollifield 13, Howard Kennedy 10, Tony Horsman 8, Steve Hill 8, Dylan Evans 7, John Priestley 6, Alan Phillips 6, Alan Davies 3, Keith Mead 2, Graham Mackenzie 1, Bob Davies 1, Gavin Fraser 1, George Cleary 1, Tony Price 1, Lance Cadogan 1, Steve Pratt 1.